DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 366 524 SO 023 638

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TITLE A Review of Innovative Approaches to LRE. Technical Assistance Bulletin No. 4.
INSTITUTION American Bar Association, Chicago, Ill. Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship.
SPONS AGENCY Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE [91]
CONTRACT G008745280
NOTE 6p.
AVAILABLE FROM American Bar Association, Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship, 750 N. Lake Shore Dr., Chicago, IL 60611.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Citizenship Education; *Computer Uses in Education; Curriculum Enrichment; *Drama; Drama Workshops; Elementary Secondary Education; Experiential Learning; *Law Related Education; *Learning Activities; School Community Relationship; Social Studies; Surveys; Teaching Methods; Writing Workshops
IDENTIFIERS *Project Inside Out; *Project PATCH

ABSTRACT

This bulletin discusses some non-traditional teaching vehicles such as plays, computers, and "learning by doing" projects used to heighten student interest in law-related education (LRE) by offering students unique experiences in a variety of settings. Four plays that have been developed or sponsored by local bar associations include: (1) "Vote is a Four Letter Word," a one woman show tracing the origins of the voting right, from America's first legislative assembly in 1619 to the ratification of the 26th Amendment that reduced the voting age to 18 in 1971; (2) "The Kingdom v. Jack Spriggins," based on the "Jack and the Beanstalk" fairy tale in which students make up the jury at Jack's trial for murder, kidnapping, and theft; (3) "Rumpelstiltskin v. the Queen," based on the Rumpelstiltskin fairy tale; and (4) "The Trial of William Penn," set in England in the last 17th century, and based on the trial of William Penn and William Mead. A law related education program, also described, includes skits, three videotapes, and a program that explores the U.S. election system and gives students an opportunity to see how the electoral process works. Hands-on projects that are discussed include "Project Inside Out, a theater project that allow adolescents to experience what it feels like to be in jail; a constitutional writing camp in which students pretend to be colonists in a space colony; and Project PATCH ideas such as a student bill of rights and an international law project. Computer uses in education are discussed. (DK)

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A Review of Innovative Approaches to LRE

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Bulletin

American Bar Association *Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship*

A Review of Innovative Approaches to LRE

Projects Bring Students a Rewarding and Unique Experience

by Mary Neil Crosby

LRE educators nationwide are investigating a broad range of non-traditional teaching vehicles such as plays, computers and "learning by doing" projects in order to heighten student interest in law-related education by offering students unique experiences in a variety of settings.

Plays

In St. Louis, LRE has taken to the stage. "Vote is a Four Letter Word," a play written by Sue Greenberg, was commissioned by the St. Louis Public Schools' Law and Citizenship Education Unit and first presented during the 1987-88 school year. Greenberg, executive director of the St. Louis Volunteer Lawyers and Accountants for the Arts, got the idea to write a play after reading several newspaper articles about poor voter turnout. She developed it in collaboration with Susan LaGrone, coordinator of Magnet Law/Consumer Education for the St. Louis Public Schools.

LaGrone's suggestion to have the Law and Citizenship Education Unit commission the play stemmed from her own interest in storytelling. "Stories can be used to teach all kinds of things—why not LRE?" LaGrone said.

A one-woman show starring actress Kathi Bentley, "Vote is a Four Letter Word" traces the origins of the voting right, from America's first legislative assembly in 1619 to the ratification of the 26th Amendment that reduced the voting age to 18 in 1971. The play cites historical documents as well as famous Americans such as Tom Paine and Anne Hutchinson who played significant roles in expanding the voting right until it applied to all citizens.

In Chicago, the Cook County Circuit Court is also using plays to make LRE more interesting through the creative efforts of its Office of Public Affairs which develops projects and plays for students at all grade levels.

Mary Neil Crosby is a freelance writer in Chicago.

One recent production is a fairy tale mock trial, "The Kingdom v. Jack Spriggins," first performed in the spring of 1989 by the court's own acting company, the Circuit Court Jesters.

The play is part of an effort to teach youth that the court is not their enemy, said Chief Judge Harry Comerford. Too often, Comerford says, young people learn about the court system after they break the law and as a result develop a hatred for the judicial system. His hope is that the projects of the court's Office of Public Affairs will help develop in young people a more positive attitude toward the court system.

"The Kingdom v. Jack Spriggins," based on the "Jack and the Beanstalk" fairy tale, depicts Jack as a fatherless, poverty-stricken 18-year-old who lives with his mother. He goes to market to sell the family cow, but instead of selling it, Jack trades it for a handful of magic beans that grow into a beanstalk.

Jack climbs the beanstalk, allegedly kidnaps a human harp, steals a magic, gold-producing goose that belongs to a giant, and kills the giant. After his adventures, Jack is charged with kidnapping, theft and murder. At his trial, witnesses take the stand, and defense and prosecuting attorneys argue the case before a jury made up of students.

The court's original fairy tale mock trial presentation, "The Case of Rumpelstiltskin v. the Queen," had its premiere during the 1986-87 school year. In the play, based on the Rumpelstiltskin fairy tale, a miller lies to the king, telling him that his daughter can spin gold. The daughter asks a wood elf named Rumpelstiltskin to spin the gold for her; he agrees on the condition that she give him her first-born child.

The elf spins the gold. The daughter marries the king, has a child but refuses to keep her part of the bargain—she wants to keep the baby. Rumpelstiltskin files suit against her.

Through Chicago's Adopt-A-School program, these plays have traveled to schools throughout the Chicago area, as well as to St. Louis, Wisconsin and Indiana.

With 200 schools already on the waiting list, demand for the program is heavy, said Milissa Pacelli, who directs the plays and serves as coordinator of the Office of Public Affairs.

Law-related education in Philadelphia has also taken the form of a play, "The Trial of William Penn," a collaborative effort of the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas, the Philadelphia Bar Association and the Philadelphia Bar Association Theatre Wing.

First produced in 1982 to commemorate Philadelphia's 300th anniversary, the play has been performed twelve times before more than 4,000 students and visitors. At the end of each performance, the audience participates in a discussion of the relevance of William Penn's trial to today's U.S. Constitution and courtroom proceedings.

The play is set in England in the late seventeenth century, and is based on the trial of William Penn and William Mead. The two men, both Quakers, were arrested for preaching in the streets after their meeting house was padlocked by the government. (King Charles II had banned all religious worship, with the exception of Anglican Church rituals.)

Penn and Mead were not allowed to have lawyers during their trial, and the judge tried to coerce the jury into rendering a guilty verdict. The jury, however, would say only that they thought Penn was guilty of speaking in the streets, but not guilty of inciting a riot.

Eventually, Penn and other Quakers came to America to escape religious persecution in England.

"Many of the amendments to the Constitution are based on (the trial of) William Penn," observes Judge Marvin Halbert of the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas.

Bulletin

American Bar Association Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship

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Designer: Harvey Retzloff
Project Director: Mabel C. McKinney-Browning

This is one in a series of technical assistance bulletins on law-related education. They are published by the American Bar Association Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship, 750 N. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60611, (312)988-5725.

This bulletin is made possible by a grant from the Law-Related Education Office of the U.S. Department of Education, Grant Number G008745280. We express our gratitude for their support.

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The First, Fifth and Sixth Amendments can trace their roots directly to the Penn trial. Rights we enjoy today, such as freedom of speech, religion and peaceful assembly, the right to be represented by an attorney and receive a fair trial by an impartial jury, as well as protection against self-incrimination, all have their genesis in this important seventeenth century case.

Judges Marvin Halbert and Berel Caesar of the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas co-produced the play which was directed by Paul Maschmeyer of the Philadelphia Bar Association Theatre Wing.

Halbert, a self-described amateur actor, said that he, Judge Caesar and other colleagues decided that creating a play would be an entertaining and instructive way to contribute to Philadelphia's celebration.

After a search of several Quaker schools in the Philadelphia area, Halbert and his colleagues were able to locate a copy of what appears to be the actual trial transcript.

The resulting production proved so popular that the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas videotaped it, and arranged to have copies sent to every county in Pennsylvania to be used as a learning tool.

"About a month ago we had a request from Anchorage, Alaska. It (the videotape) is constantly being used," Halbert said.

Another innovative LRE program has been developed by the Citizenship Education Program of the Ashland School District in Ashland, Ohio which has created skits and videotapes to enhance its LRE effort.

"We have four school districts within the county. All four are actively involved and have adopted LRE curriculum guidelines," said Judge Michael McKinley, an Ashland County juvenile and probate judge who has been active in LRE.

Each school district has a week-long LRE focus time. The Citizenship Education Curriculum Team creates two curriculum guides a year: a year-long guide and a short-term guide for the focus time. "The idea has been to develop a skit of some relevance to the focus week theme and present it at the elementary schools," Judge McKinley said.

In addition to skits, the district has also created three videotapes: "Uncle Sam," "Uncle Sam's Constitution," and "Vote America."

The positive reaction to the program's initial offering, "Uncle Sam," an analysis and examination of the Pledge of Allegiance produced during the 1986-87 school year, led to the production of two subsequent videotapes.

In "Uncle Sam's Constitution," County Commissioner Rick Sowash has elementary school students create an imaginary country. He hands each student a shield representing a constitutional right, which he then interprets.

In the spring of 1988, the program created "Vote America," an exploration of America's election system which gives students an opportunity to see how the American electoral process works by actively involving

them in it. Students divide into parties, conduct primaries, choose candidates and conduct a mock presidential election with each candidate and party having its own slogan and position on certain issues. The videotape teaches that the President cannot stand by himself and depends upon the support of Cabinet members, Congress and citizens to help him lead the country.

"Hands-On" Projects

Project Inside Out

For older students, the Cook County Circuit Court Office of Public Affairs sponsors Project Inside Out, an educational theatre project which allows adolescents to experience what it feels like to be in jail.

Presented by prison inmates and high school students, "Inside Out" is based on student interviews with inmates. Through a series of structured improvisational theatre workshops, students chronicled prisoners' experiences and developed them into a mosaic of prisoners' impressions, experiences and advice to youth.

Constitutional Writing Camp

A mock space colony constitutional writing camp is another project designed to involve students in LRE through hands-on experience.

The concept originated in Seattle three years ago under the sponsorship of Today's Constitution and You, a project of the Metropolitan YMCA of Seattle. It was developed for high school students to get them to think about how life in 2087 would be different from today, according to Ann Sweeney, former school program coordinator of the Today's Constitution and You project.

Students from different parts of the state met in Seattle in an attempt to forecast the needs of a space colony society in the twenty-first century and to write a constitution based on those projected needs. The camp has been held three times in Washington State, twice for high school students and once for elementary school students, and has been adapted by Washington elementary school teacher Tarry Lindquist into a study unit that teachers can use in the classroom.

Organizations outside the state have also used the idea of a space colony constitutional writing camp. Americans on Purpose, a joint effort of the YMCA and the Minnesota Center for Community Legal Education at the Hamline University School of Law in St. Paul, has sponsored two statewide mock constitutional conventions based on the theme, bringing together high school students from all over the state.

Students were told to pretend they were colonists in space with the same concerns American colonists had during and after the American Revolution.

Each was assigned to be a member of either a space-oriented faction or an earth-oriented faction in order to simulate the friction that existed 200 years ago between those colonists who sought independence and those who wanted to remain under British rule.

After dividing into groups, students met to assess the colony's needs, such as food, water, and clothing, and what provisions the colony's government and constitution needed to make to assure that those needs were met. Each faction then chose representatives to the writing committee which drafted the space colony constitution. A dance held the same night the writing committee met afforded those not on the committee a welcome opportunity for social interaction.

Jennifer Bloom, director of the Minnesota Center for Community Legal Education, said that the program's trickiest aspect was keeping the students' minds focused 200 years into the future. To make the space colony environment as realistic as possible, program administrators had students make their own passports and use "planet money cash cards" for transactions. "Krogsul," or green cornbread, was a native food of the colony and was served at each meal.

Ideas from Project PATCH

A student bill of rights and an international law project are two recent innovations developed by Tom O'Donnell, director of Project PATCH, an LRE program of the Northport/East Northport School District in New York.

As part of the project, high school students developed and administered a questionnaire they used to survey some 2,600 students in high schools all over New York State to determine what rights high school students feel are important. After the results were tallied, 12 student leaders from 10 regions of the state met to develop a first draft of a bill of rights for New York State high school students. The final draft was created in October 1989.

The students involved in the project "want to guarantee that students have rights and responsibilities within their school communities," O'Donnell said.

While preparing their first draft, students met with Evan Davis, counsel to New York Governor Mario Cuomo as well as state education commissioner Thomas Sobol and other state political figures.

O'Donnell described the project as "an eye-opening experience" for the students because they were not coddled, but were treated as responsible young adults. The government officials asked the students tough questions, particularly with regard to the cost of implementing some of the draft provisions proposed by the students.

PATCH is also involving Northport students in an international law project which is bringing together students from School 1129 in Moscow and the Antwerp International School in Belgium.

Students from the three schools held their initial meeting this past May in Belgium and decided to address what they feel is a critical issue facing our global village—the greenhouse effect and deforestation. They will meet again in April 1990 at the International Court of Justice at The Hague to present possible solutions and recommendations on the problem.

Project PATCH participates in these LRE programs through a partnership with the New York State Bar As-

sociation's Law, Youth and Citizenship program directed by Eric S. Mondschein.

Computers

Computers are being increasingly used as a teaching tool that can make LRE more engaging, according to Phyllis Maxey Fernlund, associate professor of education at California State University. Fernlund is a former director of the Civic Education Enhancement Project, which introduced law-related education to the 19 campuses of California State University.

According to Fernlund, computers have two important advantages in the educational setting. They may be used to create and access databases and can serve as tutorial devices in the classroom.

A database—a collection of information organized by subject area—can make LRE in the classroom more efficient and productive. "Rather than going to the library, you simply insert a diskette into the computer and find resources right in the classroom," Fernlund said.

Jim Lengel, education technology consultant for Apple Computer, agrees, noting that if a class is studying search and seizure, for example, students can use the database to look up all cases in criminal law pertaining to search and seizure.

In addition, tutorial software can help students understand the Constitution and the components of the Bill of Rights, Fernlund said. Computers also have the advantage of allowing students to move through material at their own pace.

Teachers can use computers to present a case study, complete with video, and then allow the computer to lead students through the case study point by point, Lengel said.

The increasing use of computers, videos, plays and projects involving hands-on experience is indicative of a trend to develop non-traditional and innovative methods aimed at making LRE more meaningful for today's students. Through creative and imaginative use of technological advances, educators nationwide are moving LRE into the twenty-first century.

Those who have developed creative LRE programs not discussed in this bulletin are invited to share their ideas by writing to the ABA/YEFC at the following address:

American Bar Association
Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship
750 N. Lake Shore Drive
Chicago, IL 60611

More information about the projects described in this bulletin can be obtained by writing to the following organizations:

Plays

"Vote is a Four Letter Word"
Sue Greenberg
4660 Maryland
Suite 13
St. Louis, MO 63108

"Uncle Sam," "Uncle Sam's Constitution," and "Vote America"
The Citizenship Education Program of the
Ashland School District
c/o The Honorable Michael McKinley
Ashland County Juvenile Court
Ashland County Courthouse
122 W. Second St.
Ashland, OH 44805

"The Trial of William Penn"
Roger McCabe
Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas
Office of Public Information
Room 364, City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Julie Miller
Office of Public Affairs
Circuit Court of Cook County
Richard J. Daley Center
Room 2853
Chicago, IL 60602

Space Colony Constitutional Writing Camp

Ann Sweeney
Judicial Educational Specialist
Washington State Office of the
Administrator for the Courts
1206 S. Quince Street, Mall Stop, EZ-11
Olympia, WA 98504

Jennifer Bloom
Minnesota Center for Community Legal Education
Hamline University School of Law
1536 Hewitt Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55104

Student Bill of Rights & International Law Program

Project PATCH
Tom O'Donnell
c/o Northport Schools
P.O. Box 210
Northport, NY 11768

Computers

Phyllis Maxey Fernlund
Associate Professor of Education
California State University
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